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Protracted conflicts in the GUAM area and their implications for international peace, security and development

The situation in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan

Security Council
Seventieth year

Letter dated 3 November 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit herewith a press release by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated 31 October 2015 in connection with the recent provocations committed by the armed forces of the Republic of Armenia (see annex).

On 27 October 2015, during the monitoring exercise conducted near the Tartar district of the Republic of Azerbaijan under the mandate of the Personal Representative of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Chairman-in-Office, there was repeated gunfire from the occupied territories controlled by Armenia's armed forces in the direction of the positions of the armed forces of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The incident forced the OSCE monitoring team to seek the protection of the Azerbaijani armed forces.

These provocative acts are yet another vivid example of Armenia's flagrant violation of the ceasefire regime and its deliberate policy of aggravating the situation on the ground. The sole responsibility for the deterioration of the situation and its consequences lies with the Republic of Armenia, the aggressor and occupying State.

I would be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 35 and 40, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Yashar **Aliyev**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 3 November 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Press release by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan

31 October 2015

On 27 October 2015, upon initial agreement, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group Co-Chairs passed from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan through the line of contact between the armed forces of Armenia and Azerbaijan to the territories controlled by the Azerbaijan army. At that very moment, a ceasefire monitoring exercise was being conducted by the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office and his field officers on the road between Tartar and Aghdara (Tartar district of Azerbaijan). Despite prior agreement to undertake measures to ensure the safety of the OSCE personnel, there was repeated gunfire from the occupied territories controlled by Armenia's armed forces in the direction of the positions of the armed forces of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The incident forced the OSCE monitoring team to seek the protection of the Azerbaijani armed forces.

According to the representatives of the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Azerbaijan, who were on the ground at the time of the incident, the OSCE team immediately contacted the opposite side to have the fire halted and to renew guarantees to hold fire. It is regrettable that, despite the obvious source and direction from which shots were fired, the Co-Chairs did not find space in their statement of 29 October 2015 to properly reflect the incident and did not name the violator. However, that does not relieve the Armenian side of the responsibility for this and other numerous provocations.

The Republic of Azerbaijan shares the assessment of the Co-Chairs that this incident represents a deliberate attempt to undermine efforts towards a settlement. Azerbaijan has repeatedly brought to the attention of the international community that, over the past years and specifically since January 2015, ceasefire violations and armed provocations by the Armenian side have become more frequent and violent, causing, inter alia, deaths and injuries among Azerbaijani civilians, including women and children. Ahead of the next round of talks in New York in September 2015, Armenia's armed forces dramatically intensified ceasefire violations, using mortars and large-calibre machine guns and artillery and specifically targeting Azerbaijani civilians living in the areas along the line of contact.

It is worth recalling that, just after another round of talks between the Presidents of Azerbaijan and Armenia in Paris on 27 October 2014, arranged by the President of the French Republic, Francois Hollande, on 6 November 2014 the armed forces of Armenia started large-scale military exercises in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. On 12 November 2014, two Mi-24 attack helicopters of the air forces of the Republic of Armenia, which were also deployed for the military exercises, approached and made attack manoeuvres in the immediate vicinity of the positions of the armed forces of Azerbaijan in the occupied Aghdam district of Azerbaijan. In response to this attack, one of the helicopters was shot down.

Consistent and deliberate provocations by the Armenian side pursue the obvious goal to create an explosive situation on the ground, undermine the efforts for the political resolution of the conflict and consolidate the status quo of occupation.

The Republic of Azerbaijan once again demands that the Armenian side put an end to its provocations, engage constructively in the conflict settlement process, comply with its international obligations and withdraw its armed forces from the territories of Azerbaijan.